

Ageing Well News

Issue 5: January 2020

A happy new year from everyone at the Ageing Well team!

We have had the busiest six months since our last newsletter, with so many new classes opening in both Somerset and North Somerset. We continue to support all our sessions across the county, as they play such an important part in keeping people active and well. Much of our focus these last few months has been on increasing the number of classes available that specifically help improve strength and balance. Since our last newsletter, nearly twenty new Tai Chi and Stay Strong Stay Steady classes have started and we hope these will make a big difference to those who attend. Our activity sessions and events also provide a great opportunity to make new friends and have some fun.

As always, we must thank all our volunteers and instructors, who are so amazing! Their hard work and commitment make a big difference to a lot of people. You are most appreciated.

If you would like more information about any of our activities, or think you could help out as a volunteer, please contact us. We would love to hear from you.

The Ageing Well Team, left to right: Nikki (front), Michelle, Dianne, Linda (front), Julie.



Adding years to life - adding life to years

News

Strength and balance programme continues to expand

We have been working with Somerset Public Health the last two years to implement an evidence-based programme, called *Stay Strong Stay Steady*, in Somerset. This programme has proved to be very effective at preventing falls. Every day in Somerset around 8 people over the age of 65 are admitted to hospital as a result of a fall.

Classes are led by qualified instructors and are held in community venues. Participants are taught a course of exercises aimed at increasing lower body strength and helping to improve balance and stability, which leads to increased confidence and a better chance of remaining mobile and independent.

We are rolling out the programme over the next three years and new, local classes are opening regularly. New sessions have just started in Minehead, Taunton, Ilminster, Langport, Somerton and Street, with further classes starting soon in Cheddar and Wiveliscombe. Existing classes continue to be well attended.

If you are worried that you sometimes feel unsteady on your feet, or perhaps you have a family history of Osteoporosis or Parkinsons, you may be interested in attending one of these sessions. Or maybe you know someone else who would benefit from attending. Please get in touch to find out more.

Promoting our Stay Strong Stay Steady classes

Over the last six months, we have produced a series of short films to help promote our classes. Our Stay Strong Stay Steady film focuses on two attendees, Kathleen and April, and the huge difference the sessions have made to their lives. We have just produced a subtitled version of this film, which is designed to be shown in the waiting rooms of GP surgeries. It will start running in Yeovil later this month.

We have also produced a new A5 flier, for wide circulation and this has already been sent out to a large number of NHS outlets and community venues. We would like to thank Carly Press for printing 10,000 of these fliers free of charge.

We continue to gain wide exposure in both regional and local press, community publications, online and in social media.

News

Tai Chi QiGong

In July last year, we ran a training programme for volunteers, to enable them to teach QiGong. This was part of our ongoing commitment to providing suitable activity sessions for older people countywide. Ten volunteers successfully completed the training and the first new classes started in October and have rolled out through January 2020.

There was a considerable amount of local media interest. Tai Chi is as effective as most high-impact exercises in improving circulation and decreasing blood pressure. As importantly for older people, it is extremely effective at improving physical balance, vitally important for helping to prevent falls in later life. We hope these classes will play an important part in keeping older people steady on their feet. The focus on breathing is also wonderfully calming, so the sessions are good for both mind and body.



All the new classes started with huge turnouts. One Nailsea location had so many people turn up on the first day, that a second class had to be scheduled straightaway and a similar situation has arisen in Clevedon. The first class in Galmington, Taunton, started with 40 hopeful attendees! We are now running waiting lists for a number of classes and hope to open more to meet demand.

Contact us to find out where your nearest class is or to enquire about becoming a Tai Chi QiGong volunteer.

Tesco “bags of life” community grant scheme

GREAT NEWS... from January to March 2020, Ageing Well is one of Tesco's three nominated charities in Wells, Chard and Minehead! As part of this community support programme, the supermarket donates to local charities and we are really delighted that we were selected to be one this year. Shoppers get to choose which charity they want to support, so please help us to build awareness for Ageing Well....and please support us in store.

Training

Mindful Movement, Mindful Stretching yoga workshop

Ageing Well volunteers and instructors were invited to take part in a new workshop at the beautiful Quaker Meeting House in Bath Place, Taunton, on Friday 17 January. The 2 ½ hour workshop was led by Anne Bond, one of Ageing Well's yoga instructors.

The session began with introductions and an overview of yoga and mindfulness, both theory and practice. Then Anne led everyone through a variety of stretches and gentle yoga postures, most of them adapted to be chair-based. Participants were able to experience some of the benefits that gentle, mindful yoga can bring, which include an increased range of movement, greater flexibility, awareness and relaxation. After the coffee break, the session continued with some stretching balance work, a modified "Down Facing Dog", and finally, a mindful breath awareness practice. "It is hoped that all left feeling both energised and relaxed, and perhaps a little bit taller!" said Anne Bond.

Could you run a chair-based exercise class for older people?

Flexercise, a project co-ordinated by Somerset County Council, has been running in Somerset since the mid 1990s. It is a chair-based activity that utilises both music and equipment to provide physical and mental stimulation for people who aren't quite up to attending a fully active fitness session.

We are always looking for new volunteers to run local sessions and we hold regular **training workshops**. We have three running soon in Wells, East Brent and Yeovil. The training is just half a day, providing health and safety information, as well as a framework to enable participants to develop ideas and movements to provide their own Flexercise session locally. This could be in nursing or residential care, retirement or sheltered housing.



Please get in touch if you would like to find out more or are interested in attending. Running one of these sessions is very rewarding and you will be fully supported by the Ageing Well team.

Fundraising

Annual fundraiser a dance away success

On Thursday 3rd October, we held our annual fund raising event at the Winter Gardens Pavilion in Weston-super-Mare. More than 150 dancers attended, joined by families, carers and volunteers, whirling round to ballroom, Latin and sequence dance favourites. Music was kindly provided by Mark Helmore.



The tea dance was, once again, organised by the wonderful Tansin Benn, who is a Trustee and Volunteer of Age UK Somerset. Tansin was joined in the interval by 30 Ageing Well volunteers, to demonstrate some of the exercises and movements they do each week in class. We raised nearly £2,000 which will help with our activities in North Somerset.

We are incredibly lucky to have been supported by so many local businesses and organisations, including Avery Healthcare's Acer House, The Hawthorns, St Monica's Trust, Helping Hands and Invest South West.



A big thank you to everyone who helped on the day, including Nat West volunteers and local school, Mead Vale Primary, who allowed their pupil, Charlie Stevens, take a day off school!

Co-op community fund

We are excited that we have been selected to take part in the Co-op Local Community Fund again this year. We feature in the local branches of Watchet and Williton but if you are a Co-Op member ANYWHERE IN SOMERSET, you can still choose Ageing Well to be the cause you support.

You should have received an email from the Co-Op about this already but if you copy the link below and sign into your member's page, you can select us. Last year, we were supported by branches in Pill, Portishead, Churchill and Wincanton and this raised more than £7,000!

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/35241>

Our People

Celebrating our long-standing volunteers and teachers

Eileen McDonald - Flexercise volunteer

Eileen has been teaching Flexercise in Cannington for fifteen years now. She had just retired and was looking for something positive to do and the programme had an immediate appeal. She still loves taking her class and has an easy, comfortable relationship with participants. Here are Eileen's top tips for potential Flexercise volunteers....

Don't take it too seriously!

Use lots of music, it gives rhythm and often people know the words to songs and enjoy the memories.

Allow time for relationships between people to develop; they then feel a sense of belonging and care for one another.

Try to bring in both repetition and variety. Repetition gives it a feeling of familiarity, while variety stops it getting boring.

Get involved – it will help your fitness, your memory and bring you new friendships.

Stay and have a cup of tea if you can (but avoid biscuits).

Chris Burt - Flexercise & "Extend" teacher

Congratulations for a record month! In just one month, Chris filled 525 exercise places in her classes; Chris runs seven classes weekly.

FREE home safety visits

If you are over 65, live alone or have disability or mobility issues, you should be eligible for a free home fire safety visit. Devon and Somerset fire and rescue offer these visits to ensure they are doing everything possible to help you live safely in your home.

The visit usually takes around 45 minutes, and the technician will check your smoke alarms and advise you on what to do in the case of a fire. They may also be able to offer more free fire safety equipment eg fire retardant bedding and alarm testers.

Call 0800 05 02 999 to speak to one of their community safety team and to arrange for a Home Safety Technician to visit your home.

We are undefeatable

We are undefeatable

We Are Undefeatable is a national campaign that supports the 15 million people living with long-term health conditions in England. Launched in August 2019, it aims to help those with conditions such as diabetes, cancer, arthritis and Parkinson's to build physical activity into their lives. It does this by sharing stories of people living with a variety of conditions, and their own journey to becoming active.

One in four people in England live with a long-term health condition, and these individuals are twice as likely to be inactive, despite evidence that being active can really help. Even small amounts of activity can make a significant difference to overall health and wellbeing. We are 100% behind this national campaign, which aims to inspire, reassure and support. For more information visit the campaign website.

<https://weareundefeatable.co.uk/>

Marketing

We have been kept very busy promoting all our classes and activities over the last six months. We have managed to obtain lots of publicity across all media types (press, radio, online) and are very grateful to everyone who has found space for us in their publication.

We have had articles accepted and run in some well-read publications across Somerset and North Somerset, including the Free Press, local editions of the Reach, the Journal, the Leveller, The Express and also in many glossy magazines like The Living Magazine. We have increased our efforts to be in all parish magazines and community papers, updated the information on local websites and actively promoted on social media each week.

We have also updated our website and we think it's now far easier to use. In addition to an overview, there are pages for the different class "genres", like Tai Chi, general fitness and Flexercise, and you can search for classes by class type or location. We also have a news page and links to other useful sites. All our wonderful new short films are there and clearly explain what each class offers.

And Finally

A Poem

Ageing Well volunteer - North Somerset

Just a line to say I'm living, that I'm not among the dead.
Though I'm getting more forgetful and I'm mixed up in my head.
Is it my turn to write to you or did I write before?
I think I owe a letter. I'd hate to be a bore.
I'm used to my bifocals, my new plates fit me fine,
My hearing-aid is perfect, but Lord I miss my mind.
I stand before the fridge at times, my poor head filled with doubt,
Have I come to put some food away, or come to take it out?
There are times when it is dark out, with my night-cap on my head,
I ask, am I retiring or just getting out of bed?
Sometimes I can't remember, at the bottom of the stairs,
Must I go up for something, or did I come down from there?
I do know I miss you, sometimes I almost cry.
And now it's almost mail time so I must say good-bye.
I'm standing by the mail box with a face so very red,
I didn't mail your letter, I opened it instead.

Spread the word!

Our classes are important for both the physical and emotional well being of all older people. Please pass the word, share our newsletter and let us have your comments and feedback.

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Marketing

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